

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GABORO 01894 171658Z
ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1894

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS BC UK
SUBJECT: SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR BOTSWANA

REF: A) STATE 157928 B) MASERU 1126

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT KHAMA'S ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY CHARLES TIBONE TOLD ME AUGUST 16 THAT PRESIDENT KHAMA HAD ASKED HIM TO INQUIRE ABOUT STATUS OF GOB ARMS REQUEST. HE REITERATED GOB NEED FOR ARMS AID AND OUTLINED POLITICAL/ MILITARY RATIONALE FOR LOOKING ONLY TO U.S. TO MEET ITS NEEDS. HE SAID GOB RECOGNIZED ITS REQUEST REQUIRED SERIOUS DELIBERATION BY USG AND APPRECIATES ITS DESIRE FOR CONSIDERED RESPONSE. ON THE OTHER HAND, PRESIDENT KHAMA IS CONCERNED ABOUT RECEIVING ASSURANCES AND THEREAFTER THE LEAD TIME REQUIRED FOR DELIVERY. GOB THEREFORE FEELS OBLIGED TO PRESS FOR RESPONSE. ACTION REQUESTED: INFORMATION ON STATUS OF GOB REQUEST FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR TIBONE'S USE IN REPLYING TO PRES KHAMA'S INQUIRY. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT KHAMA'S ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY CHARLES TIBONE TOOK ME ASIDE AT AUGUST 16 SOCIAL FUNCTION TO RELAY PRES. KHAMA'S INQUIRY ABOUT STATUS OF GOB REQUEST FOR ARMS. IN FACT, TIBONE SAID, THIS HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GABORO 01894 171658Z

ONE OF THE FIRST SUBJECTS PRES. KHAMA HAD RAISED WHEN HE RETURNED FROM LONDON JULY 28. TIBONE SAID HIS OWN LEAVE AND MY ABSENCE (IN LESOTHO AND SWAZILAND) HAD DELAYED HIS INQUIRY. BEFORE LEAVING EARLIER THAT DAY (AUGUST 16) FOR A WEEK'S VACATION AT HIS TULI BLOCK FARM (200 MILES OUTSIDE GABORONE), PRES. KHAMA HAD REMINDED TIBONE TO SEE ME. TIBONE SAID GOB WAS SENSITIVE TO U.S.

CONCERNS ABOUT UNDERTAKING ARMS ASSISTANCE TO GOB AND HAD THEREFORE NOT PRESSED. BUT EVENTS OF PAST TEN DAYS HAD EMPHASIZED URGENCY OF THE NEED.

3. I NOTED TWO POINTS IN REPLY: FIRST, THAT LATEST COMMUNICATION FROM THE DEPARTMENT ON THE SUBJECT HAD BEEN SERIES OF QUESTIONS (REF A) TO WHICH WE HAD SENT REPLIES (REF B); SECOND, THAT I ASSUMED GOB REQUEST WAS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION AND THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN VETOED AT ANY STAGE OF THE PROCESS THUS FAR. IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, AND WITH ONLY GENTLEST OF PROBING AS TO GOB THINKING, TIBONE EMPHASIZED FOLLOWING POINTS: GOB MADE A CONSCIOUS POLITICAL CHOICE IN TURNING TO THE U.S. FOR ARMS. IT WAS FIRST OF ALL A MARK OF "COMMON ATTACHMENT TO DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES". IT ALSO SHOWED BOTSWANA'S ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE THAT ARMS REQUEST WOULD NOT BRING "PRESSURE" TO CHANGE ITS PRINCIPLES. IN ADDITION, HE SAID, GOB WAS THINKING OF THE FUTURE AND THAT U.S. WAS UNQUESTIONABLY, IN THE LONG RUN, THE MOST RELIABLE SOURCE OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT. FINALLY, HE NOTED U.S. REPUTATION FOR TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY IN SUCH FIELDS.

4. I COMMENTED ON DESIRABILITY OF STANDARDIZATION AND ASKED WHETHER, IN VIEW OF DELAYED U.S. RESPONSE, GOB HAD FELT IT NECESSARY TO "EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE SOURCES".
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PAGE 03 GABORO 01894 171658Z

TIBONE CATEGORICALLY CONFIRMED THAT GOB HAD NOT APPROACHED ANY OTHER COUNTRY TO MEET ITS SECURITY NEEDS. HE GREATLY HOPED IT WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY BECAUSE "WE ARE NOT READY TO COMPROMISE OUR PRINCIPLES -- AT LEAST NOT YET, AND WE HOPE NEVER". IN CONCLUSION, TIBONE SAID HE WOULD APPRECIATE ANYTHING I COULD GIVE HIM FOR USE IN REPLYING TO PRES. KHAMA'S INQUIRY RE STATUS OF GOB REQUEST.

5. COMMENT: TIBONE'S RECORD AND REPUTATION AS FAITHFUL AND RELIABLE SPOKESMAN FOR PRES. KHAMA IS REASON TO CONSIDER HIS AN AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT OF CONTINUING GOB RELIANCE ON U.S. FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND REASONS UNDERLYING GOB DECISION. IN VIEW OF PRES. KHAMA'S CONFIDENCE IN US, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT HE WOULD WANT A STATUS REPORT ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH HAS TAKEN ON INCREASING IMPORTANCE IN THE PAST TEN DAYS AND SHOWS NO SIGN OF SUBSIDING. WE ARE REPORTING BY SEPTTEL THE COMMENTS OF VISITING UK MILITARY TEAM FOLLOWING A ONE-WEEK SURVEY OF BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE. THE UK TEAM'S CONCLUSIONS FULLY SUPPORT GOB REQUEST. ACTION REQUESTED: IN VIEW OF THE GOB'S UNDOUBTED NEED AND COMPELLING REASONS, I SINCERELY HOPE WE CAN BE FORTHCOMING IN RESPONDING TO PRES. KHAMA'S

INQUIRES. WOULD APPRECIATE REPLY ASAP.
NORLAND

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